8. THE CREATIVE CITIES DISCOURSE: PRODUCTION AND/OR CONSUMPTION?

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The already considerable debate about what constitutes a 'creative' city becomes ever more critical as the world urbanises at a rapid pace. In this chapter the author argues that the key tensions in discussions over what makes cities more conducive to and supportive of creativity revolve around perspectives that are either production-centric or consumption-centric. Scholars are increasingly prepared to claim priority for the city-region over the nation-state as an economic and cultural agent in the contemporary world, but are they ready to deal with major changes in the nature of cultural production and consumption themselves? A number of examples of new challenges for the creative cities 'discourse' rounds out the chapter.

Introduction

I live in a place called Brisbane. The city, along with the entire city-region of southeast Queensland (reaching south to the Gold Coast, north to the Sunshine Coast, and westward to Toowoomba), has undergone rapid population growth over the last decade or two, fuelled mostly by internal migration from Australia's southern states. Indeed, for a period of time in the 2000s, it was the second fastest growing city-region in the western world, second only to Phoenix, with growth rates exhibiting classic signs of sun-belt migrations during that period. Like Phoenix, southeast Queensland attracted retirees, together with those escaping higher housing costs in the larger Australian metropolises. In the most recent wave of such migration however, professionals have, for the first time, become a significant part of the cohort moving into the region, attracted by challenging career opportunities along with the

well-established lifestyle, family rearing and housing affordability factors. Although internal migration slowed down when the global financial crisis impacted on Queensland's economy, the demographics of this most recent wave would count among Richard Florida's (2002) creative professionals.

That said, Brisbane is no real contender for the upper tiers of creative cities. Indeed, in creative cities place-competition, it would stand a long way back—in the third or fourth tier—and is still emerging from a long history of political and cultural backwardness. The well-known Australian satirist Barry Humphries was at his coruscating best when he proposed that Australia is the Brisbane of the world! Nevertheless, the data show clear growth in the professional class, and this has had beneficial impacts on cultural participation and consumption. Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of tertiary-qualified workers rose from 19.2 per cent to 23.3 per cent, whilst conversely the percentage of the lowest qualified workers decreased from 50.8 per cent to 43.0 per cent (Australian census data in ID 2010: 27). Accompanying this trend has been a corresponding growth of the specifically creative workforce, by which I mean the creative and support jobs related to arts, design, media and communications, not the generalised white- and no-collar workforce as defined by Florida (see Cunningham 2011). Indeed, between the censuses of 2001 and 2006 more of these creative workforce jobs were created in Queensland than any other state, accounting for almost a third of national growth (10,359 new creative workforce jobs appear in Queensland, which is 30 per cent of all new such jobs in Australia).

Yet, one of the defining features of Brisbane's creative workforce employment is its continuing lack of producers—the people who assemble resources, do deals and create wealth for the whole of the creative workforce. At the time of the most recent (2006) national census, Brisbane's total workforce was about 43 per cent the size of Sydney's, and its creative workforce was 29 per cent compared to Sydney. However, Brisbane had only 15 per

cent of the number of producers that Sydney had, and only 18 per cent the number of directors, across screen, theatre, radio, and events. The proportion of these key creative professionals has grown a little since 1996 (when the number of Brisbane producers and directors were respectively only 12 per cent and 14 per cent of those found in Sydney). But the key point remains: the producer/director pool has always been low in Brisbane and has remained so.

Likewise, the key producer services 'soft' infrastructure in Australia is mostly found elsewhere. All the large employers and firms in the creative sector, and the bureaucratic support infrastructure, are headquartered in Sydney and Melbourne. This includes the major broadcasters, pay-TV and telecommunications companies, federal government funding agencies, regulatory bodies, Internet service providers, the professional associations representing the interests of the creative sector in games, film, TV, radio, multimedia, Internet, and even the consumer bodies which agitate on the consumption side.

Thus, while there has been record growth in internal migration, and a corresponding growth in the professional and creative workforces and also (following what we might expect from Florida's thesis) cultural consumption, there has not been a commensurate increase in the capacity for Brisbane to be a significant producer and wealth-creator of culture. However, the great variety of indexes available for ranking cities always provides the chance for a good news story: in The Economist Intelligence Unit's survey of 140 cities worldwide, Brisbane is currently 16th, while the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) research network slots Brisbane in as a third tier Gamma+ (see Infrastructure Australia 2010: ch 2 and Taylor et al. 2010). Its 'liveability' has allowed Brisbane to score well in some indexes, which has been a source of civic pride and a new branding strategy, in which it is recently touted as 'Australia's new world city' (www.brisbanemarketing.com.au).

However, faced with cultural infrastructural deficit within the nation-state, Brisbane and southeast Queensland increasingly look to cultural export markets in the Asian region to align with Queensland's massive focus on commodities exports into, and tourism from, this region. Brisbane has seven sister city relationships; all are cities in east Asia or the Asia-Pacific, none is North American, South American, African or European. Major cultural initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Triennial (an art exhibition), the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (a screen competition) and the World Theatre Festival (a contemporary performance season) further turn the city-region's strategic focus outside the nation-state.

This consideration of Brisbane serves to illustrate several key points I wish to argue. Relationships between cultural consumption and cultural production are complex and may not necessarily align; indeed the tension between production-centric and consumption-centric accounts of what makes for a creative city or city-region is, I argue, its central motive force. Brisbane exemplifies this tension. It also partakes in what is a global shift of attention from the nation-state, as the locus of economic and cultural agency, to the city-region—a central feature of the creative cities literature.

Creative Cities Discourse (CCD) and production-consumption tensions

To engage, as this volume does, with cultural policy and politics in its urban setting, must be to engage with the creative cities discourse. Speaking to the book's themes of political economy of culture at the city level, the attraction of creative talent, city branding and urban planning, CCD is a rapidly growing literature across many discipline fields: urban studies, urban planning, architecture, design, media communication, and cultural and economic geography. (To think of creative cities discourse is, in an instrumentalisation of Foucault, to propose that such bodies of knowledge-practice are always ordered in ways that produce as well as inhibit understanding; they are structured by tensions that need to be made explicit.) It

is hybrid; the corpus consists of historical and analytical work (Hall 1998; Sassen 1994; Saxenian 1996; Scott 2000, 2005), work which is more focused on urban planning (Montgomery 2007) and work which is concerned with place-competitiveness (Florida 2002, 2005, 2006; Florida and Tinagli 2004; Landry 2000, 2006). It is a broad and deep academic discourse, often strongly policy-oriented, and thus also highly technical, when it engages with urban zoning regulations, architectural design, and the vagaries of statistics. Equally, it can be highly rhetorical, with place competitiveness provoking what many academics might regard as egregious and tendentious displays by civic officials as they jostle to put their city on the map. Tensions, and confusions, between the descriptive and the normative abound.

Increasingly ubiquitous place competition often draws on rigorous research and analysis but also, in the hands of many of its practitioners, is driven by the need for both hard economic and symbolic capital. Yet this strong element of ranking and tiering contrasts with approaches where every city can have its day and be creative. In the battle for city profile, there is a fundamental tension between the established pantheon of truly world leading cities (as extolled by Sassen 1994 or Hall 1998) and the approach that offers, with appropriate strategy, policy and programs, virtually any city the opportunity to bootstrap itself into contention (as developed by Richard Florida, Charles Landry, John Montgomery and others).

Tensions in CCD are structured by what I would call its master polarity—the tension between production-centricity and consumption-centricity. A sense of this polarity can be gleaned from the recent and quite neutral definition of the creative city by cultural economist David Throsby:

> The concept of the creative city describes an urban complex where cultural activities of various sorts are an integral component of the city's economic and social functioning. Such cities tend to be built upon a strong social and cultural infrastructure; to have relatively high

> concentrations of creative employment; and to be attractive to inward investment because of their well-established arts and cultural facilities. (Throsby 2010: 139)

Beneath Throsby's appealingly Arcadian vision of the creative city lies a seething, dynamic debate structured by this tension. In his important and influential *The Rise of the Creative Class*, urbanist Richard Florida (2002) neatly reversed the usual economic booster strategies employed by governments and councils throughout the developed world. Instead of inward investment to build industrial-scale production infrastructure and capacity, he famously promoted the idea that city growth strategy can be based on 'building a community that is attractive to creative people' (Florida 2002, 283). The 'creative class' (by which he meant everyone from bohemian artists to young urban professionals), by virtue of their lifestyle-based locational choices, drive city renewal and growth. The argument is that 'places with a flourishing artistic and cultural environment are the ones that generate economic outcomes and overall economic growth' (Florida 2002, 261) not because of the economic muscle of the cultural/creative industries but because of their high-tech workers' pulling power.

While Florida's work has attracted strong and sustained criticism, it is undeniable that his focus on creative occupation counterbalances the usual dependence simply on industry statistics in industry development debates. His insistence on 'creative' capital rather than the more generic 'human' capital has focused attention on the creative worker in mainstream policy debate in ways no other contribution has. The generic argument is made by Charles Landry (2000) that cities have one crucial resource – people, and that human creativity 'is replacing location, natural resources and market access as the principal key to urban dynamics' (quoted in Throsby 2010: 139). But Florida insisted that generic human capital was too imprecise a category to capture his understanding of 'urban dynamics' and instead has put the creative class center stage (Florida 2005: 6). While the great scholars of the city (Lewis Mumford 1961, Jane Jacobs 1961, Peter Hall 1998) have observed and analysed *ex*

post facto, Florida and his ilk champion policy interventions that give municipal authorities reason to consider a hitherto hidden or neglected resource.

Having said this, it is the case that the bulk of academic commentary runs against Florida. It is often argued that the definition of the creative workforce is too broad at one third of the US workforce and there are significant problems with the implied causal relationship between the creative class and economic growth (Peck 2005). While there may be no real sense of class identity or agency in Florida's notion of the creative class, it has driven an easily stereotyped vision of inner urban, modish, bike-riding connoisseurs of nightclubs and restaurants that is weakly correlated to economic growth and social opportunity (Oakley 2004; McRobbie 2005). It has tended to create confusion and displace policies aimed at the specifically defined creative workforce and its sustainability (Cunningham 2011) as the consumption-oriented focus on discretionary expenditure by the creative class favours white collar professionals rather than bohemians. The focus on tolerance being the key to the three Ts (talent, technology, tolerance) (Florida 2005: 7)—the centrepiece of Florida's claims to embedding a progressive politics in his research—has proven difficult to sustain. The lack of causal or even a strong correlative relationship between cultural diversity and openness and economic growth has led Florida and his team to step away from a strong adherence to tolerance as a driver (Storper and Scott 2009: 165). Essentially, the fatal flaw, for our purposes here, is that Florida tells us something about what creatives do at *leisure*, but not what they do at *work*.

This branch of the CCD contrasts with the resolutely production-centric accounts of the classic and recently-minted creative cities accounts of Annelee Saxenian (1996), Saskia Sassen (1994), Allen Scott (2000; 2005), Michael Storper (Storper and Scott 2009), Ann Markusen (2006), Michael Curtin (2003, forthcoming) and other key writers in the field. These writers are driven by the need to account for global economic dynamics, the effects of

postfordism and flexible accumulation on contemporary creative production practice at the level of particular, and especially globally leading or emerging, cities and city-regions. Scott asserts that

> The origins of urban development and growth in modern society reside, above all, in the dynamics of economic production and work. … To be sure, actual cities are always something vastly more than just bare accumulations of capital and labor, for they are also arenas in which many other kinds of phenomena—social, cultural, and political—flourish. We might say, to be more accurate, that localized production complexes and their associated labor markets constitute proto-urban forms around which their other phenomena crystallize in various concrete ways. (Scott 2006: 2)

Refuting the claims of consumption-centricity, Scott and Michael Storper warn that

> Recourse to amenities-based theories as a guiding principle for urban growth policy is ill-advised because their theories manifestly fail to address the basic issues of building, sustaining and transforming regional ensembles of production activities and their attendant local labor markets. (Scott and Storper 2009: 164)

The production-centric school of thought has made profound contributions to our understanding of the dynamics of global cultural dynamics and flows and indeed dominates the commanding heights of the academic literature. But it cannot be the last word on the matter, as consumption-centric accounts play a key role for that swathe of cities (like Brisbane) which will never sit in the pantheon of first tier cities, and to which the ministrations of those like Florida, Landry and Montgomery are directed. Again instrumentalising Foucault, the master tension in CCD between production- and consumption-centricity is a *productive* one. Policies to support production and for consumption don't necessarily align and are often in direct competition. The tension between production and consumption will remain and heighten, as we will now see, as urbanisation

reaches epochal proportions, and what counts as production and consumption blur into each other under conditions of globalisation, digitisation and convergence.

The increasing centrality of CCD

2009 was the tipping point in the global history of human demographics. From this year, a majority of the world's population are living in urban areas. Doug Saunders' (2010) *Arrival City: How the largest migration in history is reshaping our world* presents the following data: advanced western urbanisation is complete. For many decades, rural dwellers have made up between 5 and 25 per cent of the population of western countries. Fewer than 5 per cent of western populations are employed in agriculture; in some cases it is as low as 2 per cent. In Asia, 41 per cent of people live in cities, and in Africa the figure is 38 per cent, but each month 5 million city dwellers are created through migration or birth in Africa, Asia and the Middle-east. By 2025, it is estimated that 60 per cent of total population will live in cities, by 2050, 70 per cent or more, and by the end of the century some equilibrium will be reached at 75 per cent. This kind of urbanisation is often represented as a holocaust in waiting, by writers like Mike Davis in *Planet of Slums* (2006), yet there are contra-accounts of slums as places where questions of sustainability, recycling and practical, low-tech innovation could be models for other parts of the world (e,g., Hermanson 2010; Hamdi 2004). This massive global urbanisation means that creative cities discourse will become, inexorably and inevitably, an increasingly important global issue.

Besides this epic demographic shift, two other megatrends are driving the rise of CCD that challenge enduring disciplinary methods, objects of study and policy frameworks. The first trend is the increasing preparedness of scholars to claim priority for the city-region over the nation-state as an economic and cultural agent in the contemporary world, as this volume's co-editors put it in their Introduction.

It's certainly the case that, under conditions of globalisation, the city region and its relations to other city regions are becoming major foci. But the trend can be overstated. It is a conceit of the transnational cosmopolitan left that the decline of the 'interstate system' (Lee 2010) represents an advance over the old Europe of imperial and colonising nation-states. But the new governance paradigm of the post war world that saw a supranational entity like the European Union perform some kind of controlling function over old imperial nations also saw the post-colonising establishment of more new nation states than ever before in history. I have myself been a strong critic of the 'decline of the nation state' proposition (Cunningham 1992; Cunningham and Jacka 1998), arguing instead that nation states, particularly those outside the western hegemony, exist as balances to the power of transnational economic and cultural forces and also interact interdependently with local, regional and provincial agents. Nevertheless, two decades on, cities, city-regions and city-cultures have undoubtedly become increasingly prominent actors under conditions of globalisation—I canvas momentarily cases where the nation state is both critical, and contrary, to the creative city.

The second megatrend relates to the changing nature of cultural activity. The creative cities discourse will increase in importance into the future because the shape of culture is changing under conditions of globalisation, digitisation and convergence. Cultural production will continue to become even more digitally created and delivered on multi-platforms as barriers to entry and transaction costs on digital platforms are lowered. Cultural production will be engaged with globally while also being narrowcast within and to increasingly targeted niches. Such 'global narrowcasting' is the emergent form in which culture will be produced and consumed into the future. Cities will become ever more a balancing, anchorage point for an increasingly global and digital mobility of culture, with locative activities, events and dynamics that secure culture's real-time, real-life embodiment. Digital culture always develops alongside rearrangements and often intensifications of such embodiment: evidence

for this can been seen in urbanistic congregations of user-consumers/producers, mixtures of virtual and geographically situated communities (Choi 2010). The question of 'quality of life' in burgeoning cities will bring the consumption and production polarities of the agenda closer together around the phenomenon of the 'produser' or producer-user (Bruns 2008).

As urbanisation continues apace, globally but especially in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, burgeoning city-regions will need to address their versions of CCD out of a quite different set of circumstances than those which have preoccupied the canonical writers of CCD who have sat within the Western tradition. Major city-regions will not necessarily be cultural production centres on a core-periphery model, with a small number of world-cities exporting to the rest of the world. They will consolidate along polycentric models such as the geo-linguistic regional model (Sinclair et al 1996). Peter Hall (1998: 23) apologised for his almost exclusively Western focus (with the singular exception of Tokyo-Kanagawa) in his magisterial account of *Cities in Civilisation*. Yet, given that the all the largest cities in the world, with the exception of New York— as long as we count Mexico City as the global south — are now or will be non-western in the near future, it is hard to imagine a successor to Peter Hall excluding in a twenty-first century survey of 'cities in civilisation' cities such as Shanghai, Mexico City, Beijing … or even Lagos.

Identifying new challenges for CCD

The structural tensions which subtend CCD are not likely to abate, but changes in modes of urbanistic congregation, and production and consumption, just outlined, mean that CCD will evolve rapidly. In this concluding section, I explore some variations on the themes of pantheons of creative cities (production-centric) or great lifestyle urbs (consumption-centric), noting where new avenues of inquiry are being generated. Each suggests intriguing extensions of what is already a very robust research agenda.

Against the assumption of waning nation-state agency, I consider the creative city as a product of direct nation-state policy prescription (Beijing) and then obverse examples – creative city initiatives where the nation-state's policy parameters are definitively worked around (film festivals; 'runaway' production hotspots such the Gold Coast). Then follow cities which lead the way as digital hotspots, where production-consumption is blurred (Seoul); and cities outside the west, and which have risen from inauspicious and informal economies (Lagos-Nollywood). The counter-discourse to that which assumes that only inner urban milieu can be significantly creative must be addressed—the creative congregation as non-metropolitan (creative suburbia, northern rivers, New Zealand). We conclude where we started—with the problematic of production capability in the context of predominantly lifestyle-consumption drivers (Brisbane). The examples I use come mainly from the 'eastern hemisphere' and, unashamedly so, for this helps move the discussion well away from CCD's traditional North Atlantic nexus.

The creative city as policy prescription: Beijing

The classic studies that constitute the core of CCD are clear about the complex, organic growth and multivariate causality of success factors for a creative city, and also how evanescent some success was—Hall's exemplar is Berlin in the 1920s. Despite this, and despite the dangers of template-driven, or 'cookie-cutter', approaches (Oakley 2004; Gibson and Kong 2005; Gibson 2010), cities the world over go on promoting place-competitiveness through strategies, policies and programs. And one of, if not the biggest strategy, must be that for Beijing. This is no municipal council boosterism. This is nation-state *dirigisme* at its most tendentious. The intent of the Chinese authorities is for Beijing to become nothing less than a media 'capital' as well as the political capital of an emerging super power.

For Michael Curtin (2003; 2008; and forthcoming), there are three essential elements for a media capital: industrial infrastructure driven by the logic of accumulation, human capital driven by trajectories of creative migration and a successful management of the forces of socio-cultural variation. China has systematically adopted creative clustering strategies to rapidly build capacity in, for example, lower-end animation, but the Chaoyang district in central Beijing is a monster creative cluster charged with bringing together 'mother ships'—critical ideological infrastructure in the media sector—with foreign investor-friendly new media and large entertainment developments; meanwhile re-asserting Beijing's priority over Shanghai's creative industries and the lowered flag of Hong Kong.

According to Angela Huang's (2010) research, the difficulty of enacting the third of Curtin's drivers—successful management of the forces of socio-cultural variation—is hampering the development of Beijing as a media capital, even as industrial infrastructure and creative migration are proceeding apace. Foreign companies can exhaust their patience struggling to access China's domestic market through regulatory and bureaucratic intransigence. The Chinese government acts both as a regulator and market designer as well as a player in supporting national media conglomerates ('mother ships') in ways that restrict competition and entrench market power. Content and technology innovation is hampered by intra-government departmental interests. Governmental promotion of socialistic cultural homogeneity compromises the maturity of a competitive market; Chinese audiences are hungry for different cultural products and experience and turn to pirated content if such 'socio-cultural variation' is not available on mandated media outlets. While there is overwhelming nation-state investment in the development of Beijing as a creative capital, there are also considerable obstacles to be overcome if it is to be successful.

The creative city as a product of city-region rather than nation-state agency: film festivals and 'runaway' screen production

Most of the acknowledged world cities of the modern era have achieved that status through a relatively benign interdependency with the nation-state, and have been the pre-eminent urban force in that country over decades if not centuries (London, Paris, Tokyo, New York). But there is also a clear obverse of the creative city as a creature of nation-state agency; these are examples where national identity is irrelevant or the nation-state is actively opposed.

Even though nation-state governance concerns itself with 'identity building and identity protection', as the co-editors put it, this remains at the rather abstract level of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' (1991). More concrete, local identity building is usually left to the municipal (or state/province if there is federal governance) level. The contrast between mainstream film industry policies at the national level (production and distribution assistance based typically on national expression and identity, attempting to balance the might of Hollywood) and those of city place-marking through film festivals is instructive.

Film festivals, like festivals generally, are place-marking activity, invested in by burgeoning numbers of cities and towns, all of which are increasingly interested in announcing their status as culturally savvy and prepared to invest and to trigger further investment. It seems as though a festival is as necessary in any given town council's repertoire as roads, rates and rubbish! Indeed, a substantial part of film consumption now takes place outside the domain of mainstream film distribution and outside the purview of national film policies. A central fact of the film festival phenomenon is that its political economy is not driven by powerful distribution muscle, as the film industry itself is, but by myriad and growing numbers of civic councils, arts and tourism government agencies, states, provinces, regional authorities, private philanthropy, commercial businesses at a local more

than a multinational level, and of course box office—all of whom invest in the film festival for local identity, prestige, and turnover. The proportion of worldwide film festival cumulative revenues sourced from the film industry itself is very small.

So-called 'runaway' screen production is typically regarded as the willing extension of cultural dependency and abject capitulation in the face of Hollywood hegemony. At the time, in the 1970s and 1980s, when Hollywood was beginning systematically to take production offshore, it would have been inconceivable for most national cultural policy and screen policy settings to support the development of facilities and creative skills to attract runaway Hollywood productions. Nevertheless, since that time, a growing number of cities have built studios, developed their creative human capital, and engaged in place-competitive bidding for large-budget Hollywood, but also Japanese and increasingly Bollywood, screen production: Wilmington NC, Orlando, Vancouver, Alicante, Montréal, Capetown, Toronto, Louisiana, Rome, Wellington, the Barrandov studios in Prague, Babelberg in Berlin, and Budapest.

Goldsmith, Ward and O'Regan's *Local Hollywood: Global Film Production and the Gold Coast* (2010) tells the story of another 'local Hollywood', Australia's Gold Coast:

> if we want to understand Global Hollywood, we need to attend not only to the design centre in Los Angeles, but also the many Local Hollywoods which have sprung up around the world. There is one Los Angeles; there are numerous Local Hollywoods. ... To get at these ordinary places we need a different attention… these places and interests have not only transformed Hollywood but also transform themselves in the process' (2010: 29).

Investing in such a volatile industry, the authors argue, was consistent with a city which had remade itself many times over as it grew on the back of national and international tourism, itself a highly volatile industry. The key urgers, investors and decision makers in this case were international studios (Warner Bros), commercial film exhibition interests, provincial

government and city council. The strategy to attract offshore high budget US movies and television and to justify it in terms of industry and skills capacity and infrastructure building set it resolutely apart from, and indeed directly at odds with, the intent of national cultural and screen policies designed to regulate for, and subsidise, only identifiable national content. It is inconceivable that such national policy settings would or could have supported the development of Warner MovieWorld Studios on the Gold Coast (and the associated major theme park).

Creative city as digital city: Seoul

Seoul is the most wired mega-city in the world, with around 80 per cent of the population having broadband and personal computers (MIC 2008). Superfast broadband and digital saturation are everyday affordances; online, Seoul netizens are globally connected but come together in highly communal, locationally-specific *bangs* (ubiquitous communal online social spaces). Scott and Storper's 'large-scale agglomeration' occurs in games and film, national-cultural assertion is strong (although local film exhibition quotas are being wound back under the US Korea Free Trade Agreement), but also the new conditions of 'produsage' (production-consumption blurring) are played out through massive social investment in user-generated content and web 2.0, a hyperactive blogosphere (OHMYNEWS), massive multiplayer online games (MMOG) (Hjorth 2008; Choi 2010). This is all mediated by the Korean language which is bound to act as a locative moderator of global-local flows. It is here in Seoul that many of most advanced experiments in connected living, in fostering 'smart and connected communities' for home, office, shopping, learning, wellness, sports, and also every other dimensions of social and personal activity, are being developed (Lindsay 2010; Dignan 2010).

The creative city fashioned out of dire circumstances: Lagos

It would be hard to think of a greater contrast to the pantheon of culturally creative cities extolled by Peter Hall than Lagos. Lagos is projected to be the fastest growing city in the world, exploding from 288,000 in 1950, to 14 million in 2010, to 23 million by 2015. Lagos is one of the most chaotic, least planned, cities in the world and yet out of it has grown the newest major film industry in the world: Nollywood. Evolving out of an informal economic base reliant on pirate networks that have gone commercial, with absolutely no state subsidy or other support mechanisms, Nigerian video is low-tech, low production quality, high volume filmmaking servicing mostly the urban poor:

> ... thinking of Nollywood as an example of low-tech, informal innovation gives us a new understanding of what an innovative media production and distribution might look like. If we think of innovation in this way ... then Lagos would surely be the innovation capital of the world. (Lobato 2009: 194; and see Lobato 2010).

The creative city as non-metropolitan: New Zealand, the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, and 'creative' suburbia

Much CCD has given rise to the widespread perception that the prototypical creative city is represented by inner urban milieux—dynamic, bohemian, innovative, and cosmopolitan—while that which exists outside, particularly the outer suburbs of large cities and smaller towns in predominantly rural landscapes, are dull, static, and culturally backward.

The case of Aotearoa New Zealand makes this perception difficult to sustain. The successes of filmmakers such as Peter Jackson; the best practice screen infrastructure he has built in Wellington (the WETA studio complex); design-led innovation into manufacturing and tourism; leading strategies for cultural and eco-tourism – these are all examples of world class creativity on a very small national population base (4.3 million), with only three cities of significant size. Those seeking to understand the creative dynamics of the country gesture

towards a ‘giant creative village, in which social connectedness, trust and a sense of belonging form an ideal framework for creativity to flourish’ (Smith 2010). This is in contrast of Florida’s vision of highly mobile, footloose creative capital based on the strength of weak ties.

The northern rivers region of New South Wales, Australia is a relatively sparsely populated non-metropolitan area but with a relatively high creative workforce and is a well-known lifestyle region, a classic ‘sea change’ destination. It is the only sustainable creative milieu outside of the Australian capital cities. But what makes it ‘sustainable’ as a creative location is the high proportion of producers with prior track records of deal making and wealth creation and who have been drawn to the region, not for Florida’s urban buzz, but for a specifically non-metropolitan lifestyle (Henkel 2010).

‘Creative Suburbia’ (see Collis et al 2010; Felton et al 2010; and see Flew and Gibson, this volume) is a project examining the motivations for creative workers to choose to live in the outer suburbs of major Australian cities. These motivations include: freedom from the distractions of the inner city, freedom from the inner city’s perceived homogeneity of culture and the constraints of having to be ‘groovy’ in a specific way; provision of better value to clients because the costs of expensive inner-city offices are not being passed on to clients; and access to more physical space including the ability to work from home in larger premises. An investigation of the location quotient, and use of an alternative statistical methodology for creative industries measurement, demonstrates that inner cities may not, in fact, be as important as it assumed in terms of the spatial disposition of creative workers.

The non-alignment of production and consumption policies: Brisbane

We noted at the start the problematic of production capability in Brisbane in the context of consumption-driven cultural growth. Production-centric policies seek to develop a stronger,

more efficient and more talented workforce, which has implications not only for workplace, business and cluster conditions but also education and skills. Policies on the consumption side instead tend to respond to demand from the professional class for more sophisticated cultural services. Florida's so-called bohemian 'creative core' tends to be less important than his creative professionals in this demand-driven scenario: it is the professionals who have more disposable income and seek to cultivate cosmopolitan, and global rather than local tastes.

Brisbane developed a balanced consumption-production mix some years ago in its five-year cultural strategy, *Creative City* (Cultural Policy Unit 2003). At least half of its eight strategic 'platforms' sought to support production capacity. The others spoke of creating vibrant neighbourhoods, celebrating diversity and social opportunity. However, a change in government soon after saw the strategy shelved, and subsequent city visioning has focused on generic lifestyle amenities, and 'creative professional' (science-technology) industry and workforce agendas (Brisbane City Council 2005).

Conclusion: Policy Implications

As a general rule, in those jurisdictions which have reasonably developed cultural policies and programs, direct support through major subsidy portfolios, as well as content regulation, occurs at the national level. These are production-centric policies. Smaller subsidy, and consumption-oriented, policies typically are found at the state, provincial and municipal levels. One of the enduring policy challenges is for optimum coordination of these differing foci of public policy.

The opportunity costs of some consumption-oriented policies can detract from innovative production-oriented policies, especially place marking through major investment in iconic buildings. Political leaders are partial to the siren song of the 'edifice complex'. A

recent UK report from NESTA (Chapain et al 2010) strikes the right note about balancing production- and consumption-centric policies:

> Although investments in the iconic public buildings that are seen to be the hallmark of creative cities can produce undoubted cultural and economic benefits, they also take money from other initiatives to support local creative businesses using an 'industry and innovation' approach ...
>
> Although the latter approach creates less immediately visible outputs, it might also be more conducive to developing a healthy and sustainable local creative ecosystem – one where creative graduates are able to gain employment when they finish their degree, creative value is captured locally, and local and regional innovative performance is improved. (Chapain et al 2010: 45)

This is particularly pertinent due the degree to which, as this chapter has noted, the production and consumption of culture are blurring, and tomorrow's citizens/consumers will expect the two to be much more interdependent. Many policies, however, can be shaped to suit both production and consumption. Access and equity policies can open up cultural experience on both sides of the ledger for those hitherto excluded. Digitising national collections, while also addressing the vexed issue of copyright for re-use, makes the cultural heritage of populations available for both personal enrichment on the consumption side and creative expression on the production side. The myriad licensing, insurance, and zoning regulations that state and municipal authorities typically have control over impact both the capacity to produce and consume at the local level in ways that are often more significant than national subsidy programs. As one activist argues, in aptly titled 'Thoughts for politicians in search of a cheap arts policy':

> Ever tried to rent a park, a hall, put on a gig or hold a show? The permits, permissions and red tape involved are where 90 per cent of the interactions between governments and the arts take place. For many artists, particularly those starting out, they are a killer. There is huge potential to lead here. Streamline the permits, slash the insurance requirements, offer meaningful exemptions for small projects and not-for-profit projects and events. Make it possible for communities to create events without the need for capital, lawyers and interminable time lost in the wheels of government. (Westbury 2010)

Balancing production- and consumption-centric policies will remain a challenge for all creative cities.

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